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ABSTRACT

This book provokes a re-examination of how expert knowledge, not practitioner know-how, has come to dominate how Americans judge and improve schools. It depicts the English tradition of school inspection to provoke the invention of better ways for judging and knowing schools in America. Data were gathered by observation of 39 local and national school inspectors, visits to 14 elementary schools and 5 high schools, and historical document analysis. Part 1, "The English Tradition of School Inspection," contains seven chapters that describe different aspects of inspection--its practice, elements, history, tensions, and contributions. Part 2, "Provocations," contains six chapters that describe ideas in inspection that challenge common American assumptions about knowing and judging schools--"being there," judgment, the practitioner's way of knowing, feedback to schools, standards, and the nature of government accountability. The third part, "New Possibilities," is comprised of three chapters that consider if and how English-school inspection concepts could make a difference to American education. The central premise of inspection is trust in experienced teachers and heads of schools. A reliance upon practitioner knowledge as a basis for school improvement remains foreign to American policy makers and educators. One table, three figures, endnotes, and an index are included. (Contains 45 references.) (LMI)

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